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Robert E. Cooper, Jr.**

**Department of Commerce and Insurance
Commissioner Leslie Shechter Newman**

CONSUMER ALERT

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**SPRING INTO YARD WORK SAFELY,
SUBSTANDARD ELECTRICAL CORDS CAN MEAN REAL DANGER**

As Tennesseans begin spring lawn work, the Attorney General's Office and the Division of Consumer Affairs remind consumers to watch out for substandard or counterfeit electrical extension cords, power strips, and other household electronics.

Consumers may want to use care and consider looking for the Underwriters Laboratories, Inc. (UL) label before buying. Underwriters Laboratories, Inc. is an independent, not-for-profit product safety certification organization that monitors and tests more than 18,850 products annually.

Counterfeiting, according to Underwriters Laboratories, has become big business and quite possibly harmful. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recalled about 600,000 counterfeit extension cords because of shock hazard in August, 2006. The extension cords, which had counterfeit UL safety labels, were made of under-sized wire and substandard insulation.

Counterfeiting costs Americans approximately \$200 billion dollars a year and accounts for the loss of over 750,000 jobs in the U.S. It affects consumers who unwittingly buy cheaper and possibly dangerous products, which includes everything from batteries to over-the-counter medicines.

“Consumers need not get the most expensive product on the shelf,” said Attorney General Bob Cooper. “But a common sense approach can help you save money and keep you safe in the long term when shopping for items such as electrical cords.”

“Consumers get caught up in the idea that they are getting a bargain,” said Mary Clement, director of the Division of Consumer Affairs. “Unfortunately, cheaper doesn’t always mean better or safer products.”

State officials suggest the following tips before buying or using electrical products:

- *Be cautious of products sold at too-good-to-be-true “discounts.” These products are often defective. It is rare to find bogus UL labels at established retailers.

- *Avoid products that have no packaging or are packaged in boxes without the product brand, product name, certification label instructions, warnings or warranty on the package or product itself.

- *Check the warning labels for consistency, and look for misspellings and ungrammatical English.

If you have questions about the authenticity of a UL label call the UL hotline at 847-664-2150.

If you suspect you may have purchased counterfeit or substandard goods, contact the manufacturer, your Better Business Bureau, and the Division of Consumer Affairs toll free 1-800-342-8385 or (615) 741-4737 or online at www.state.tn.us/consumer.

For more information about Underwriters Laboratories and UL tags log on to:

<http://www.ul.com/regulators/index.cfm> and for more information about counterfeiting and how to protect yourself log on to the Consumer Report’s website at <http://www.consumerreports.org/>

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